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# Lead Scientist's Report

**Summary:** This report presents four items, 1) recently released Delta Science Program sponsored Independent Review Panel reports, 2) an update on the La Niña conditions, 3) the November 2011 Fall Midwater Trawl fish abundance indices, and 4) State Proposed Policy for Nutrients for Inland Surface Waters of the State of California.

## Independent Review Panel Reports

Three Delta Science Program sponsored Independent Review Panels have released their reports.

- Independent Review of the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) Effects Analysis Conceptual Foundation and Analytical Framework
  - The Review Panel's report provides 11 recommendations to ensure that the Effects Analysis achieves its intended purpose and provides population viability for covered species. To view the Panel's report visit: http://deltacouncil.ca.gov/event-detail/3700
- Independent Review of the Economic Sustainability Plan for the Delta Protection Commission
  - The Review Panel's report highlights strengths and weaknesses of the Economic Sustainability Plan and provides recommendations for its improvement toward best meeting its intended goals. For more details see Agenda Item 8. To view the Panel's report visit: http://deltacouncil.ca.gov/event-detail/4120
- 2011 Operations Criteria and Plan (OCAP) Annual Review
  - The Review Panel's report includes recommendations to the implementing agencies of the biological opinions and long-term operators for the State Water Project and Central Valley Project for improving implementation of the Reasonable and Prudent Alternatives. To view the Panel's report visit: http://deltacouncil.ca.gov/event-detail/3877

## Update on the La Niña Conditions

La Niña conditions are present in the equatorial Pacific Ocean and are expected to continue and strengthen throughout the Northern Hemisphere again this winter. La Niña conditions are well correlated with below normal precipitation and reduced water from snowmelt in Southern California and decreased precipitation in the southern U.S. (including Texas and Florida). The effects of a La Niña event on precipitation and river flows in Northern California are much less predictable because this region falls in the transition zone between generally wetter conditions in the Pacific Northwest and drier conditions in the southwestern U.S. Currently, less than average rainfall totals have occurred in the Northern Sierra since the beginning of the water year in October. Cumulative precipitation for an average of eight stations in the Northern Sierra as of December 8 was 6.5 inches for the water year with the long-term average (1922-1998) for this region being about 12 inches in early December.
To access the latest ENSO and La Niña condition information visit:
http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/analysis_monitoring/enso_advisory/index.shtml

To view the latest Cumulative Daily/Monthly Precipitation totals for the Northern Sierra visit:
http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/current/PLOT_ESI.pdf

## November 2011 Fall Midwater Trawl Fish Abundance Indices

Fall fish numbers are continuing to look good. Surveys to estimate pelagic fish abundance and distribution trends in the Delta are conducted annually through the Interagency Ecological Program Fall Midwater Trawl (FMWT). Twenty-three delta smelt were collected in November for a monthly index of 23. The summed September through November index for delta smelt (127) is the highest index since 2003, a considerable increase from the past seven years of September-November indices. The summed September through November indices for Age-0 striped bass (204), longfin smelt (176) and American shad (758) are the highest they have been since 2006. For threadfin shad the summed September through November index (139) is the third lowest in FMWT history, but many additional threadfin shad (2200) were caught outside of the historical FMWT sampling area in the Cache Slough region of the northern Delta.

For more information about the November 2011 FMWT survey results see the Department of Fish and Game Fall Midwater Trawl Memo (Attachment 1).

## State Proposed Policy for Nutrients for Inland Surface Waters of the State of California

The State Water Resources Control Board (State Board) is developing a nutrient policy for inland surface waters, excluding inland bays and estuaries in California. The nutrient policy would establish nutrient water quality objectives and establish methods to control nutrient over-enrichment in inland surface waters of the state. The State Board is currently considering two different approaches for its nutrient policy, 1) the California Nutrient Numeric Endpoint (CA NNE), and 2) the U.S. EPA 25$^{th}$ Percentile Ecoregion Approach. CA NNE is based on an evaluation of risk relative to beneficial uses and is the preferred approach of the State Board's staff. A public scoping meeting was held on October 27, 2011 to provide a forum for early public consultation on the development of the proposed nutrient policy. Public comment was received by the State Board through November 10, 2011. The State Board's staff plans to release a draft policy/staff report during the second half of 2012. The first State Board hearing on the draft policy/staff report is scheduled for fall 2012 with the goal of adopting a state nutrient policy in 2013.

For more information about the State Water Board's proposed policy for nutrients for inland surface waters of the State of California visit:
http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/plans_policies/nutrients.shtml

## List of Attachments

Attachment 1: DFG Fall Midwater Trawl Memo

## Contact

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